

Date: 18 March 2015

Protect against mosquito bites this autumn

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District (NBMLHD) is urging people to take extra precautions to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes this autumn.

The call comes after NSW Health has seen an increase in reporting of people infected by mosquito-borne viruses with 539 notifications of Ross River virus infections across the State compared with just 79 for the same period in 2014.

NSW Health's Arbovirus Monitoring Program has recently detected Ross River Virus and Barmah Forest Virus in mosquitoes around in Sydney, including around the Georges River, Homebush and Hawkesbury areas as well as a number of other parts of the State.

Dr Bradley Forssman, Director of Public Health NBMLHD, said "Autumn is the peak time of the year for mosquitos to carry infections so people should take extra care to avoid being bitten".

These infections can cause symptoms including tiredness, rash, fever, and sore and swollen joints. The symptoms usually resolve after several days, but some people may experience these symptoms for weeks or even months.

There is no specific treatment for these viruses. The best way to avoid infection is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

The next few weeks when many people will be spending the Easter break outdoors will be ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes carrying viruses.

"It is particularly important for people planning to take trips during the Easter holidays to be prepared with measures to prevent mosquito bites" Dr Forssman said.

Simple steps to avoid mosquito bites include:

- Avoid being outside unprotected, particularly during dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active. When outside cover up as much as possible with light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing and covered footwear.
- Apply mosquito repellent regularly to exposed areas (as directed on the container). Repellents containing Diethyl Toluamide (DEET) or Picaridin are best.
- Don't use repellents on the skin of children under the age of three months. Instead use physical barriers such as netting on prams, cots and play areas for babies.
- When camping, use flyscreens, or sleep under mosquito nets.

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District

Media and Communications, Tel 4734 1960 Fax 4734 4201

- Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by getting rid of items that hold water or by emptying containers.

Ends.

Media Contact:

Ida Rohne, Senior Media Officer

P: 02-4734 2024

M: 0417 143 680